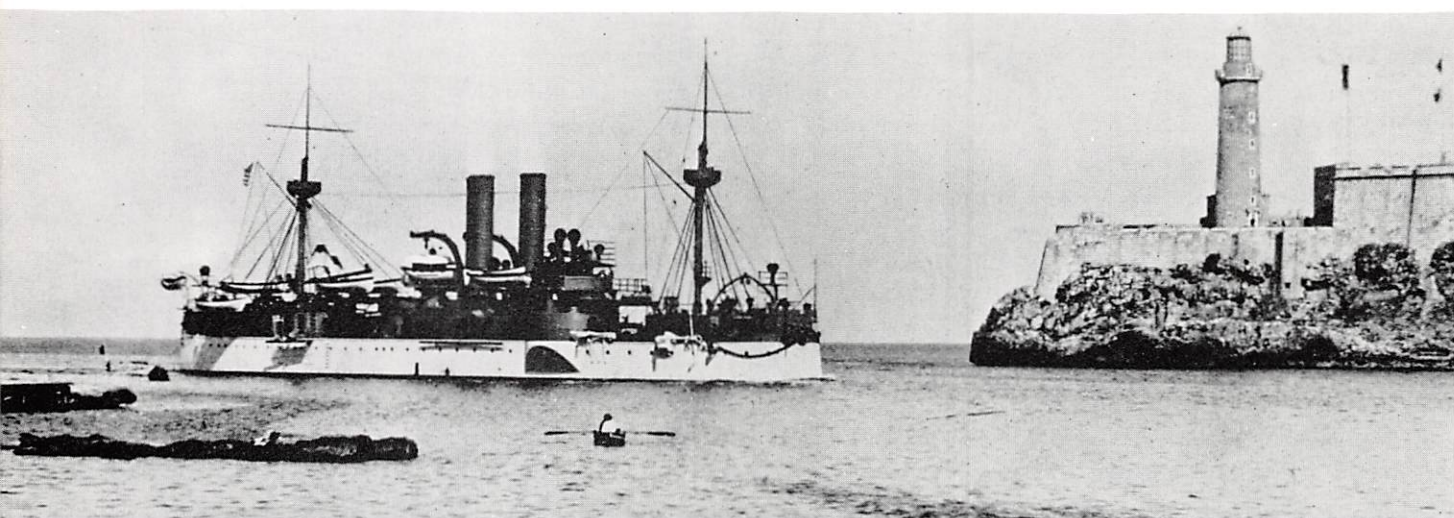


A bad summer for an amateur army

THE *Maine* was a tangled wreck in the harbor of Havana. . . . We commoner folk began to boil and seethe with ardor to kill a Spaniard." Thus Charles J. Post launched his memoir of the Cuban campaign. As a knowledgeable New Yorker and newspaper artist, Post realized that publisher William Randolph Hearst had incited the war and was boosting circulation by inciting patriotism. Nevertheless Post enlisted in the 71st Infantry Regiment of the New York National Guard. As an inconspicuous private he fought as well as most, traded sketches for food and survived "Compound-Enteric-Typhoid-Malaria" to paint the vivid combat pictures on the following pages.

Private Post's little war had more than its fair share of comic confusions, tragic mistakes and bizarre anomalies. Fighting cheek by jowl, without modern arms or decent maps, were an ex-Confederate general, Joe Wheeler, and a young man who would become Secretary of the Navy in World War II, Frank Knox. Time and again the army was rescued from disaster by an enemy just as incompetent, and dispirited to boot. Colonel Teddy Roosevelt damned the level of American generalship at San Juan Hill (*opposite*), saying, "The battle simply fought itself." Later Post reached the same conclusion about the strategy of the entire campaign: "It had none." But the amateur private, more generous than the amateur colonel, summed up: "It was a commando raid long before the term 'commando' had been invented . . . a brilliant military victory . . . against odds and in spite of blunders on the very battle line!"



INVITING WAR, the armored U.S. cruiser *Maine* glides past Morro Castle into Havana harbor on January 25, 1898. War came two months after the ship was blown up on February 15.

SCRAMBLING TO VICTORY up San Juan Hill (*opposite*), U.S. troops escape a deadly barrage, and storm the hilltop blockhouse. This key to Santiago's defenses fell on July 1, 1898.

could not give them back to Spain—that would be cowardly and dishonorable; (2) that we would not turn them over to France or Germany—our commercial rivals in the Orient—that would be bad business and discreditable; (3) that we could not leave them to themselves—they were unfit for self-government—and they would soon have anarchy and misrule over there worse than Spain's was; and (4) that there was nothing left for us to do but to take them all, and to educate the Filipinos, and uplift and civilize and Christianize them, and by God's grace to do the best we could by them. . . . And then I went to bed, and went to sleep, and slept soundly, and the next morning I sent for the chief engineer of the War Department (our map-maker) and I told him to put the Philippines on the map of the United States . . . and there they are. . . .

MCKINLEY, early in May, could not have told "within 2,000 miles" where the Philippines were. Seldom has anyone recorded the change that took place in five months in the minds of millions of Americans so clearly as the President in his account of his midnight soul-searching.

True, William Jennings Bryan, who had a tendency to believe that he heard the divine word a bit more clearly than did others, had now come out as an anti-imperialist, hoping that opposition to empire would be a useful issue in 1900. He was wrong; McKinley beat him in 1900 by an even wider margin than in 1896.

So, in February 1899, the Senate passed the peace treaty that acquired the Philippines, Puerto Rico and Guam (one of the Marianas Islands). During that year America divided the Samoan Islands with Germany and took possession of Wake Island as well. Also in 1899 Secretary of State John Hay asked Berlin, London and St. Petersburg, Tokyo, Rome and Paris to agree to the so-called "Open Door" policy, whereby all the great powers would guarantee equal commercial opportunity within their spheres of influence in China. And in the following year, when a group of anti-foreign Chinese, the "Boxers," staged an uprising in Peking and penned up the European colony in its legations, 2,500 American soldiers took part in an international military rescue operation (the Chinese government itself being powerless).

It was done. Not entirely at the urgings of Mahan and Strong—certainly not to satisfy American investors or traders with foreign nations—the United States had become a nation with overseas possessions, with all the grandeurs and miseries attached. Cuba, idealism, naval technology, religion, fate and the urge for relief from the tensions of the '90s—all had played a part in bringing about the change.

William Allen White put it most simply. "What is to be will be," he said, adding a wistful note: "And yet thousands of people cannot help longing for the old order. They cannot but feel that . . . this deepening of responsibilities brings a hardship with it. . . ." "Mr. Dooley," less sentimental, simply announced that as "a wurruld power" we could no longer watch quietly while others played the game of international poker. We were now a part of it, and "be Hivins, we have no peace iv mind."

It would take a while for the full meaning of such warnings to sink in. But as the Stars and Stripes went up over Manila and Honolulu and San Juan, Americans were not apt to take a somber view. They stood on the threshold of a new century, at the gateway of a new world. They had made more of the world theirs, and most of them were exuberant. It was a time for looking at where they had come from, and for choosing new destinations.



This cartoon from the cover of the old "Life" magazine for December 28, 1899, was captioned: "Our Expansive Uncle But It's Only Temporary." It was a wry comment on the widely held view that the will of providence ("Manifest Destiny") compelled the United States to expand beyond its borders, even at the cost of war, to save less fortunate peoples from barbarism.